

PRESS RELEASE

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SCAG, KERN COG LEADERS CONVENE TO PROMOTE UNIFIED TRANSPORTATION & HOUSING PRIORITIES FOR THE REGION

TEJON RANCH, CALIF. - Leaders representing Southern California's regional planning agencies met today to address a series of common planning priorities and funding strategies. Elected officials and senior staff from the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) and the Kern Council of Governments (Kern COG) – representing seven Southern California counties – agreed to work as partners on efforts to meet the region's transportation and housing needs. Summit participants also addressed priorities for transporting goods in the region and ways to overcome funding shortages to pay for key investments, and both organizations acknowledged the need to track the progress of the proposed Tejon Ranch development.

SCAG and Kern COG representatives shared ideas on how best to utilize state Blueprint Grant funds awarded to these organizations to assist in their planning efforts as part of their respective regional growth visioning initiatives. Kern COG is the early stages of its growth visioning effort, with workshops planned for this fall to begin seeking input on a new vision for the area. SCAG is utilizing the Blueprint funds to help undertake the second-phase of SCAG's 20-year growth visioning initiative, Compass Blueprint, to help give local governments more effective tools to plan for Southern California's future growth.

"It is important that SCAG and Kern COG remain in close coordination on a variety of issues given the inter-relationships of the transportation, land use and other planning issues facing both of our organizations," said Mark Pisano, SCAG executive director. "From improving road and rail congestion, to improving housing availability, to addressing a crisis in transportation funding, we need to unify our efforts to plan for our collective future."

In addition to Mark Pisano, SCAG was represented at the meeting by Calabasas Mayor Dennis Washburn. Kern COG representatives included Kern County Supervisor Michael Rubio; Wasco Mayor

Cherylee Wegman; California City Councilmember Nicholas Lessenevitch; and Executive Director Ron Brummett.

Summit participants received an update from representatives of the Tejon Ranch project, which if completed, would include 23,000 homes, 6,000 new jobs as part of the Tejon Industrial Complex, and a 100,000 acre Tejon Ranch Preserve. As the project moves forward, both SCAG and Kern COG officials recognized the critical need to coordinate efforts, particularly to ensure that the development is incorporated into future Regional Housing Needs Assessments and Regional Transportation Plans developed by the organizations.

In addition, SCAG representatives discussed the outcomes from the recent Southwest Compact Bi-National Hearing hosted by the City of Mexicali, and SCAG invited Kern COG to participate in the ongoing efforts of their Southwest Compact Task Force. The two planning organizations updated one another on efforts to begin programming federal transportation funds received through the SAFETEA-LU legislation enacted last year. The organizations also discussed the importance of common goods movement-related infrastructure investments, particularly on the I-5 Freeway as well as possibly on State Route 58.

The leadership from SCAG and Kern COG agreed to continue meeting on a regular basis to exchange information, coordinate planning for programs and projects, generate ideas about topics of mutual interest and potential funding sources.